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Melodie; or Melodius Musick of Pleasant Roundelaies", edited by Thomas Ravenscroft, and printed in 1609, forty-three years before Playford's publication. We then step back seventy-nine years, when we find that the same class of music existed, from the evidence of the first collection of secular music that was printed in England. This contains eleven pieces for four voices and nine for three. As a single part the "Bassus"* is the only portion of the work that is known; no estimation can be formed of the merit of the music, but its character may be supposed from that of the words, which is shown in the following titles:—"Joly fellow, Jolly," "And wyl ye serve me so," and "Mynyon go trym." The composers of the collection are Cornysh, Pygot, Ashwell, Gwynneth, Cowper, Taverner, Jones, and Fayrfax, and the work is believed to have been printed by Wynkyn de Worde, in 1530. Thirty years more take us back to the first specimens that have been found of the class of writing which was, beyond a question, the origin of our English glee; and these are to be found in the Fayrfax MS., dated 1500, but containing compositions of probably twenty years earlier. The composers of this collection were William Newark, Sheryngham, Edmund Turges, Tudor, Browne, Gilbert Banister, Richard Davy, William Cornyshe, Sir Thomas Phelyppes* and Robert Fayrfax. I am indebted for many of the above very interesting historical particulars to the kindness of Dr. Rim-bault, whose constant willingness to place the results of his research at the service of anyone who may have occasion to refer to them, cannot be too warmly acknowledged.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

THE opening night at this establishment, on the 29th March, introduced Madlle. Lagrua in the part of *Norma*, a trying ordeal indeed to pass with an audience predisposed to judge every *débütante* in that character by comparison with Grisi; and if therefore we do not pronounce at once that she will be elected to the vacant throne, we are bound to say that we believe her destined to occupy a permanent position near it. Nothing can be more perfect than her acting throughout this arduous part; and if at times the real physical power absolutely necessary to give effect to the sudden bursts of passion, is not equal to her great predecessor, we are inclined to think that she makes ample amends for the deficiency by the touching tenderness which she throws into those truly womanly passages with which the character abounds, and which—at the risk of offending the hero worshippers—we have always felt the want of in Giulia Grisi. Her second appearance as *Leonora*, in "La Favorita," confirmed the favourable impression made on the opening night; and we have little doubt of her proving a most valuable acquisition to the company. Another event of

importance was the *débüt* of Herr Wachtel, the tenor, in "Il Trovatore," a part requiring the utmost powers both of singing and acting. That Herr Wachtel fully realized the expectations of the audience is not enough to say, he excited the naturally cold frequenters of this establishment to a pitch of enthusiasm. He has a fine and noble voice; one thoroughly German, and therefore somewhat difficult to manage, according to the established Italian method; but he accomplished his task admirably, singing the C from the chest with the utmost ease. He has since appeared as *Arnoldo*, in "Guillaume Tell," and fully established himself as one of the greatest singers with which the part has been associated. If the applause with which his high notes are invariably received, do not have the effect of rendering him careless of his *mezza voce*, we have great hopes for his future; and trust that during the season he may have an opportunity of proving his powers in German opera, where we have no doubt he will feel more thoroughly at home. Herr Schmid, the new bass, sang the part of *Walter* to perfection. Indeed we have rarely heard so much genuine effect created in the music of this character; and the great trio in the second act, with Graziani as *William Tell*, was so marvellously given, as to draw forth thunders of applause.

"Masaniello" was performed on the 5th ult., for the first appearance of Signor Mario; and a portion of this opera was especially chosen for the "Garibaldi night," the interest of the audience however being transferred from the stage to the box, in which sat the real hero of the night.

Many of our old favourites have returned to us during the month, including Marie Battu, Madame Rudersdorff, Neri Baraldi, &c., and the season bids fair to be an extremely brilliant and attractive one.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE opera selected for the commencement of the season on Saturday the 9th ult., was Verdi's "Rigoletto," in which Signor Varese, the original representative of the Court Jester, made his first appearance, and achieved a decided success. As a pure Italian singer, we welcome him at once in a part so thoroughly Italian; although we cannot but feel that so accomplished an artist should have sought the suffrages of an English audience before the voice had suffered the wear and tear of so many arduous campaigns. His conception of the character differs in many parts from that of Signor Ronconi, not however we are inclined to think to the detriment of the latter artist, although in mere vocal ability, he is, in spite of the ravages of time, still immeasurably his superior.

Madlle. Vitali, who sustained the part of *Gilda*, was heard for the first time in this country, and heard, we may add, with much pleasure. With a fresh and clear *soprano* voice, she wants but experience to attain a high rank on the operatic stage. A natural grace and elegance lends a charm to every action; and as her nervousness gradually wore off, she so thoroughly took the audience with her, that during the whole of the second act she was applauded most enthusiastically.

Madlle. Titieni made her first appearance this season in "Lucrezia Borgia," with Giuglini as *Gerardo*, and Madlle. Bettelheim, the new contralto—of whom we hope shortly to hear more—as *Orsini*, on the evening of Garibaldi's visit. A new *Canto Nazionale*, and the War-song called "La Garibaldina," both composed by Signor Arditi, were performed amidst the utmost demonstrations of enthusiasm, on this occasion; and many of the audience even added their voices to the strength, if not to the harmony, of the refrain "O Garibaldi! nostro salvator," in the latter composition.

We hope in our next number to notice Nicolai's opera "Falstaff," which is, we believe, quite new to this country.

* This single voice part (formerly in the possession of Dr. Rim-bault, and sold by him some years since for a few shillings), was purchased for the British Museum, at Sotheby's Auction Rooms, in December, 1863, for the enormous sum of £80, although, from the absence of the other parts, this one is utterly useless, except as a typographical curiosity.

* This was a title of courtesy for a priest, and not exclusively the sign of knighthood at the period, and betokens thus the clerical calling of the musician.

MONDAY POPULAR CONCERTS.

THESE Concerts were resumed after the Easter recess, with Signor Sivori as principal violin, and Charles Hallé as pianist. Mozart's Quartet in D minor was admirably chosen for the Italian violinist's first appearance. His playing, not only in this, but throughout the evening, was most masterly; and he seems to have gained both in tone and feeling since we last heard him. M. Hallé played in his most finished style the "Suite Française" of Sebastian Bach, which seemed to please the audience as much as the most modern *fantasia*, the applause being not only spontaneous, but universal.

SACRED HARMONIC SOCIETY.

EXETER Hall was crowded in every part on the 15th ult., when the finest performance of "St. Paul," in our recollection was given, with Madame Parepa, Madame Sainton-Dolby, Mr. Weiss, Mr. Henry and Mr. Cummings for the principal vocalists. It would be scarcely necessary to do more than mention this list of singers, did we not feel that in justice to Mr. Cummings, who supplied the place of an artist so popular as Mr. Sims Reeves, we have a right to bear testimony to his thorough efficiency in the part. Mr. Cummings is working out his career in the legitimate way, by care and study; and is already taking his place in public estimation as an earnest and conscientious artist.

NEW PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

THE third *soirée musicale* of this recently-formed society was given on the 19th ult., at St. James's Hall. Amongst there were some interesting features in the programme, amongst which we must especially notice the singing of Mr. Chandos-Pole Gell, an amateur, in "Non piu Andrai." Mr. T. M. Mudie, who returns to us after a long residence in Edinburgh, played two of his own pianoforte solos, "Serenade," and "Sea Captain's Song," both of which compositions exhibit that accomplished musician-like treatment which characterises all the pianoforte works of this writer; and we must also mention a duet for pianoforte and harp, by Kalkbrenner, which was extremely well performed by Miss Fynes, and Mr. T. H. Wright. The principal professional vocalists were Madlle. Enequist, Mrs. Merest, and Miss Eleonora Wilkinson.

CRYSTAL PALACE.

THIS establishment seems to be fast growing into one of the principal musical institutions of the country. During the past month, in addition to the usual periodical concerts, it has been called upon to represent the feeling of England on two important occasions—one in honour of the great hero Garibaldi, and the other in honour of the great poet Shakspeare—and that it has in each instance fully supported its high musical character, deserves to be placed upon record, not only in proof of the rapid growth of the art in England, but as one of the events eminently characteristic of a spontaneous national tribute to valour and intellect.

On the morning of the presentation of a sword to General Garibaldi, a very excellent concert was given, in which the principal *artistes* of the Italian opera took part. The Shakspeare celebration offered a more favourable opportunity for an occasional musical display; and to give the utmost effect to the choral settings of Shakspeare's poetry, Mr. Leslie's choir lent its valuable aid. The delicate part-singing of this body of vocalists is too well known to need more than a passing word of praise; but we cannot dismiss this interesting concert, without especially commending Mr. Leslie's Madrigalian Chorus, "Soul of the age, Shakspeare rise," which was written for the occasion, and produced a marked effect. We have no doubt that the chorus, which is simple in construction, and offers no great difficulties in execution, will speedily become a favourite with choral societies.

Madame Parepa and Mr. Cummings sang several solos; and amongst the instrumental pieces associated with the name of Shakspeare, Nicolai's Overture to the "Merry Wives of Windsor" was performed by the band of the company, under the able guidance of Mr. Manns.

WE are informed that the Lessee of Her Majesty's Theatre generously intends (in the course of the present season) placing his theatre and the services of all his artists at the disposal of the directors of the Royal Academy of Music, for the purpose of a grand performance in aid of the funds of that most meritorious National Institution; on which occasion, Mr. Mapleson purposes to introduce to the public any of the pupils, vocal or instrumental, that the professors of the Royal Academy of Music may deem sufficiently advanced in their studies. We have reason for believing that Mr. Mapleson's kind interest in the professional welfare of the pupils of this establishment will by no means be limited to this special occasion.

A very curious holograph has been lately found in the Public Record Office, which is probably unique, and which contains a song or melody, by the celebrated Doctor John Bull, the reputed composer of the National Anthem. It may not be generally known that the origin of the words of "God save the King," is to be traced to the watchword and countersign given out in the Lord Admiral's orders, on the 10th of August, 1545, "the watch wourde in the night shalbe thus, 'God save King Henrye;' thother shall answer, 'And long to raign over us.'" The paper in the national repository, just discovered, is signed "John Bull." It is certainly an interesting example of English musical notation, and will no doubt be highly esteemed by lovers of music, as well as by antiquarians.

On Wednesday, the 16th of March, we hear that a very excellent performance of the *Messiah* took place at Madras. It is interesting to find that good music is thus rapidly spreading in every direction; and although on this occasion the pianoforte and harmonium were the only representatives of Handel's instrumentation, the execution of the entire work appears to have afforded the utmost satisfaction to an audience comprising all the principal people of Madras. The tenor voices of Mr. Wright and Mr. Morgan are spoken of in the highest terms; and Mrs. Wright created quite an effect in the recitative "Behold a Virgin," and the air "He was despised." Mrs. Hunter Blair and Mrs. Hay Campbell are also mentioned as possessing excellent voices, the last-named lady eliciting the loudest applause in "I know that my Redeemer liveth," an air certainly testing the highest powers of vocalization. This appears to have been the last concert of the season, as the papers speak of the rapid approach of the hot weather; but we trust that on some future occasion we may have to record other musical entertainments in Madras, equally creditable to those who have thus sought to inculcate a taste for good music in this city.

It would be impossible to chronicle one half of the musical performances which have taken place in connection with the Shakspeare Festival. Not only on the anniversary of his birth, but for a long time before, and some time after this day, concerts have been given in his honour; and even programmes not devoted to the celebration of this event have contained many compositions with which his name is linked. Of course Mendelssohn and Bishop have reigned during the month in undisputed sway; but there are many others, amongst whom we may mention Mr. G. A. Macfarren and Mr. Sullivan, who have in our own time gained a right to be heard, not only because of a "Shakspeare celebration," but by virtue of their own intrinsic merits. At St. James's Hall, the Agricultural Hall, and numerous other concert-rooms in the metropolis, musical Shaksperian performances have been given; and we hear that Mendelssohn's overture to the "Midsummer Night's Dream," was played near Herne's Oak, at Windsor.